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ABSTRACT

This task force report of the agricultural educational policy committee of the American Vocational Association focuses on the role of the vocational agriculture teacher. The first part of this report summarizes the philosophy needed by all teachers, major program objectives perceived by teachers of agriculture for their students, functions of an agriculture teacher, and instructor qualifications. The second half of the report lists the future concerns and needs in agricultural education: supply of qualified instructors, funding, opportunity for advancement, workload, decreasing emphasis in providing for supervised occupational experience programs, lack of adequate agricultural manpower needs information, erosion of program area identity, decrease in state staff, budgetary/staff cutbacks at teacher education institutions, decreasing enrollments, increasing proliferation of Future Farmer of America activities, reduction in year-round programs, increasing legislative mandates, and erosion of national and state leadership. (LRA)

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# TASK FORCE REPORT

## The Role of the Vo-Ag Teacher

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June 20, 1980

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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## Introduction

The Agricultural Education policy committee of the American Vocational Association, at its March, 1979, meeting authorized the establishment of a task force to develop a policy statement on "The Role of the Vo-Ag Teacher."

The goal of the task force was to complete the policy statement prior to the March, 1980, Policy Committee meeting. The policy statement is also incorporated as a part of the National Seminar on Vocational Agriculture to be held in Kansas City, Missouri, July 15-17, 1980.

A committee of four teachers were primarily responsible for developing the criteria with the aid of consultants in development, editing and review.

The actual writing was developed from each of the teacher's own perceptions of the role of the teacher of agriculture.

Committee members and consultants included:

John Murray - Chariman and Adult Education

Richard Weber - Secondary

Carroll Shry - Secondary

Eric Arnston - Postsecondary

Dr. Ozzie Gilbertson - Consultant

Mr. Ralph Dreesen - Consultant

The following are the perceptions of the role of the vo-ag teacher as seen by the members of this committee.

## Foreword

Much has been stated, observed and researched over the past few years concerning the shortage of vocational agriculture teachers and lamentation over teachers leaving the profession. Much rhetoric has been used concerning the role of the Agriculture Teacher and the many jobs a "good" Agriculture Teacher performs in his or her local community. The work load has continued to increase. There has been little, if any, reduction in old responsibilities, concerns and activities as new activities or responsibilities have been added.

There has also been a gradual change in the work ethic in this country. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find the commitment to work the longer hours required to develop an oustanding program. The early vo-ag teachers put in long days much like farmers and ranchers of that day. Times are changing and with it the value of the work ethic.

When a successful vo-ag teacher has the opportunity to enter another occupation with perhaps more money and less working hours, many do not hesitate to move. This has always happened and will continue in the future.

Each person has his/her own limitations and the teacher of agriculture is no exception. When one attempts to shoulder all the responsibility for a successful program alone, the individual loses effectiveness and the program suffers. The students and the community are the real losers.

Through shared responsibility and an orderly arrangement of priorities, the instructor can secure relief from being overburdened while at the same time accomplishing more. This priority setting also assures that instructors have some time to spend with family or friends. Worry about unmet professional obligations can be minimized. This assurance of a realistic job expectation in itself reduces tension and minimizes the frustration which one faces whenever the work load is unbearable.

Development of people is a prime responsibility of the teacher. How else can this be done except by allowing them to share the load, make decisions and live by the results of their decisions and activities? Some sharing of responsibility can be accomplished through the use of paraprofessionals and in some cases advanced students. It is true that the task will not always be accomplished in the exact manner of the former teacher. Only by participation will individuals grow. It is equally true that numerous things would not get done if they all had to be done by the teacher of agriculture.

The teacher in vocational agriculture may possess a bundle of energy, have enthusiasm to spare and an unclouded vision of what can be and should be accomplished. This is the type of worker the local administration dreams of employing. Each of these characteristics is noteworthy and commendable. But even with these qualities, the instructor may be an ineffective leader and a poor developer of the educational program in agriculture.

It comes hard for some individuals, but it seems essential that teachers realize that the important thing is to get the task done, not who accomplishes it. Carrying the entire load is a needless burden when others are available and willing to assist. Delegation is far more worthwhile and inviting than frustration and stagnation.

By concluding that assistance is needed and then arranging for sharing the burdens, the teacher accomplishes more while conserving energy for the essential tasks.

Role of Teachers of Agriculture

I. Philosophy needed by all Teachers

The program of vocational agriculture and its instruction is concerned with all of the people in the school area who are engaged in or are preparing to enter agricultural occupations. Agricultural education stresses the individual. The type of instruction, course content and learning activities are determined by the occupational competencies required. Agricultural education programs provide an opportunity for the school to spread its influence into the homes and businesses in the total school patronage area. Instructional programs are conducted on a year-round basis to take advantage of the opportunity to develop specialized competencies which are seasonal in nature. The total resources of the community are utilized to provide relevant and meaningful educational experiences for students. The use of advisory committees has always been advocated by agricultural educators. Students are taught the decision making process in addition to the manipulative skills needed in an agricultural occupation. Individualized on-farm and on-job instruction is an integral part of the instructional program at all levels. Specifically, vocational agriculture/agribusiness teachers are concerned with:

Secondary school students

Post Secondary students

Out of school youth

Adults who wish full-time vocational and technical education in agriculture for entry into agriculture

Employed youth and adults who need vocational-technical education in agriculture to upgrade their occupational performances

Those youth and adults who because of social or economic handicaps cannot benefit from regular vocational-technical education programs in agriculture

II. Major Program Objectives Perceived by Teachers of Agriculture for Their Students

A. To develop an understanding and appreciation of the career opportunities and the preparation needed to enter and progress in agricultural occupations.

B. To develop the competencies necessary to secure satisfactory employment and advancement in an agricultural occupation, including entrepreneurship.

C. To develop those human relations skills and attitudes required for success in an agricultural occupation.

D. To develop leadership abilities and civic responsibilities.

III. Functions of an Agriculture Teacher

A. Provide instruction for youth and adults:

1. Secondary
   a. To explore careers in agriculture
   b. To develop competencies needed by individuals engaged in or preparing for entry into an agricultural occupation, including entrepreneurship.
   c. To prepare students for post secondary education in agriculture
   d. To plan and develop occupational experience programs
2. Post secondary education
   a. To develop specialized competencies in agricultural occupations which prepare graduates for employment, including entrepreneurship.
   b. To plan and develop occupational experience programs
3. Adult education in agriculture
   a. To upgrade the competencies of established farm operators in order to increase their efficiency and to assist families in achieving their family goals.
   b. To provide upgrading and updating of those employed in agricultural occupations.
   c. To provide and conduct a farm business management education program
   d. To provide specialized courses in specific enterprises and/or agricultural technology and agricultural mechanics

B. Be responsible for the Future Farmers of America Chapter, Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization and/or the Young Farmers and Ranchers Association

C. Organize, administer and maintain the department
D. Conduct a school and community relations program
E. Develop the program based upon the community needs assessments
F. Provide for student guidance, placement and follow-up activities
G. Participate in appropriate professional activities

IV. Instructor Qualifications

A. Secondary and adult
   1. Bachelor of science degree in agricultural education plus agricultural experience
B. Post Secondary
   1. Bachelor of Science in technical agriculture or agricultural education plus experience in the occupational area taught

Future Concerns and Needs

V. Concerns

1. Supply of qualified instructors
   a. Qualifications for instructors are similar to those demanded by agribusiness and industry and many are hired to work in industry immediately after graduation or after teaching 1-5 years
   b. Economic opportunities in farming or ranching reduce a number of instructors available each year
   c. The "excess teachers" syndrome in other fields has influenced the decision of students not to pursue teaching
   d. Use of emergency certified teachers
   e. Fewer vo-ag teachers will come from farm or ranch backgrounds
   f. Teaching vocational agriculture is not a long term goal for many persons who complete an agriculture education degree program and seek initial employment in vocational agriculture education
   g. Teacher preparation in our undergraduate teacher education programs is geared primarily for secondary preparation with little or no emphasis on adult and post high teacher preparation

2. Funding
   a. Decling enrollments in many rural areas has meant inadequate financial resources to adequatel, fund educational programs in agriculture/agribusiness
   b. Salary renumeration for teachers of limited experience is only adequate, not highly attractive in comparison with other agricultural related employment
3. Opportunity for advancement
   a. Limited within profession
   b. Incentive awards for professional program excellence are generally FFA related and are geared for secondary teachers
4. Workload
   a. Teacher bargaining laws within states are causing pressures for reduced workload
5. Decreasing emphasis in providing for supervised occupational experience programs for students
6. Lack of adequate agricultural manpower needs information
7. Erosion of program area identity
8. Decrease in state staff for supervision and administration of programs
9. Budgetary/staff cutbacks at teacher education institutions
10. Decreasing enrollments and its effect on departments/programs
11. Increasing proliferation of FFA activities which require more instructor time
12. Reduction in year-around programs and contracts for teachers
13. Increasing legislative mandates
14. Erosion of national and state leadership

Needs

1. As the industry of agriculture/agribusiness changes in the future, so must the vo-ag teacher change to meet the needs of a declining student population
2. Teacher preparation at the undergraduate level in our teacher education institutions must encompass all levels of instruction in agriculture - secondary, adult and post-high
3. Multiple teacher departments and differentiated staffing are necessary to meet the ever changing complex needs of the industry of agriculture

4. Funds from industry of agriculture in the form of scholarships, including forgiveness of loans are needed to retain more of the teachers in the profession
5. The profession should recognize teachers more for their excellence in teaching
6. Professional award programs developed and offered by our professional vo-ag teacher associations must permit teachers at all levels of instruction to compete equally for such recognition
7. Inservice Needs
   a. Every teacher must be kept up-to-date on the ever changing technology in the industry
   b. New developments in Agriculture/Agri-Business Industry may impose the need for the Agriculture teacher to provide special training programs such as the licensing of pesticide applicators, energy conservation, etc.
   c. State staffs, teacher educators and agriculture teachers must work cooperatively to develop viable programs to meet the needs of the teacher
   d. A need for updating teacher's technical competance by use of industry leaves
8. Since legislation mandates that teachers serve special education and disadvantaged students, a comprehensive pre-service and inservice instructional program must be developed in these areas
9. A comprehensive program in pre-service and inservice education should be developed for the teachers of agriculture regarding the management of time and priorities
10. Continue ways to make the professional organization serving vo-ag teachers (NVATA, AVA, State Vocational Education and ag teacher association) more relevant to the needs of its membership
11. Meet the needs of programs and new areas of employment
12. A public relations program should be developed/expanded which includes:
   a. Publicity of students, parents, schools and business community
   b. Positive relationship with local newspapers, T.V. and radio to publish departmental activities
   c. Involvement with farm organizations such as the Farm Bureau, Grange Farmers Union and others
   d. A systematic program of information to inform legislators of activities in educational programs of students

13. Vo-ag teachers should be continuously involved in professional improvement through such activities as:
    a. Involvement in their professional organizations such as NVATA, AVA, State Vocational Education and Ag Teacher Associations
    b. Ag teacher conferences which offer technical short courses and upgrading workshops that will help improve instruction in the classroom
    c. Technical and professional graduate courses with practical application to the classroom situation
    d. Planning committees and/or advisory councils to help identify new advancements in the field, necessary resources and equipment to improve the teaching situation
    e. Use agriculture teachers in the writing of the texts to be utilized in the classroom
14. Guidance, placement and follow-up activities relating to our clientele
15. Continue to develop and secure effective legislation to insure quality programs

## Summary

The teacher of agriculture at all levels is a catalyst. It is important to provide positive motivation and inspiration to the students while they are working.

Vo-ag teachers must be properly prepared to provide classroom instruction with many innovative ideas and approaches to develop the students competence and enhance their interest in their chosen field of endeavor.

As the student is studying and learning in the classroom, the teacher must provide for practical laboratory activities, on the job training experiences or supervised occupational experiences and personal development activities.